

T H O U G H T S
O N S U C H
P H R A S E S O F S C R I P T U R E ,
A S A S C R I B E
A F F E C T I O N S a n d P A S S I O N S
T O T H E
D E I T Y .

Being an Attempt
To explain the TRUE MEANING of
such ASCRIPTIONS ;

A N D

To show the great Use they are of for in-
structing the Mind, and affecting the
Heart.

W I T H

A N A P P E N D I X ,

Concerning the Sincerity of GOD in the
Calls of the Gospel.

Deut. xxix. 29. *The secret Things belong unto the LORD
our God ; but those Things which are revealed belong
unto us and to our Children for ever, &c.*

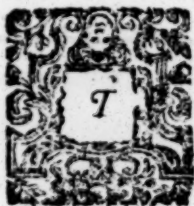
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THE Subjects touched upon in this Treatise being so numerous, and some of them such as might not be expected at first Thought upon reading the Title, I therefore judge it proper to set them before the Reader thus distinctly.

The INTRODUCTION gives a Hint of the several Sorts of condescending Phrases found in the Word of God, *Page 1, 2.* —fixes upon and describes those that come into present Consideration, in which God is said to *justify or condemn us, to love or hate us, to bear or refuse our Prayers at different Times;* which Expressions seem inconsistent with the Simplicity of the Divine Nature, and Unchangeableness of his Will, *p. 3—5 :* It shows that these Phrases cannot be expressive of the Acts of the Divine Will or Power, or of any supposed real Affections in the Deity, *p. 6, 7.* —and then puts the Question concerning their real Meaning, *p. 8.*

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These Ascriptions of a changing Will and changeable Affections to God, being so frequent in Scripture, I find it necessary to divide them into two Classes. (1) Those that relate to the *Covenants* of Works and Grace. (2) Those which particularly regard the *Dispensation* of the Covenant of Grace. And thus the Treatise is divided into two Parts.

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If by Means of this Treatise any are enlightened, quickened or comforted; let them ascribe all the Glory to him, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good Pleasure.

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SAMUEL PIKE.

The Reader is desired to rectify these few Mistakes with his Pen.

Page 7. line 13. for *probably* put *properly*. P. 27. l. 18. for *determinates* put *determines*. P. 40. l. ult. for *Not when* put *Now then*. P. 99. l. 3. for *centers* put *center*.

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THE
INTRODUCTION.



NOTHING is more desirable to an enquiring Mind, than to attain to regular and rational Conceptions of those Things it is conversant about ; whether they be philosophical, moral or divine. And surely Subjects of a theological Kind, deserve the greatest Attention ; and clear Apprehensions concerning them are therefore the most important. In these Matters the Sacred Writings especially ought to be consulted, and we should endeavour to get clear Ideas of the Meaning of the Expressions, and Phrases thereof. Every one that reads his Bible with Attention,

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tion, cannot but observe, that it abounds with Metaphors and condescending Expressions, which must not be understood literally.

Several of the Actings of our Minds towards God are express'd under the metaphorical Expressions of *Leaning, Resting, Coming, Receiving, Eating, &c.* These we may have pretty clear Ideas of, by observing the Words of Scripture, and comparing them with the Workings of our Minds, as they respect the Understanding, the Will, the Affections, the Memory, or Conscience. Several of the Perfections of the Deity, and of his Operations upon us, are express'd in such Language as if the Great JEHOVAH had Eyes, Hands, Arms, Feet and the like, which cannot be literally understood, without entertaining the most gross and irregular Conceptions of the Deity. These are to be understood by abstracting our Minds from the material and bodily Resemblances, and carrying our Thoughts thro' and beyond them, and referring

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ferring them to his Omniscience, Omnipotence, and Omnipresence.

But besides these, there are Abundance of Scripture-Phrases, which seem to represent the Divine Being, as one that has a changeable Will, and changeable Affections : As if at different Seasons his Mind and Will were altered concerning us ; as if he had strong and lively Affections of Admiration, Love and Hatred, Hope and Fear, Joy and Sorrow, Delight and Aversion ; and as if these Affections acted with different Degrees of Liveliness, towards different Persons, and at different Seasons towards the same Persons. Whereas I think we are naturally led to conceive all the Acts of the Divine Mind and Will to be unchangeable and eternal : For the absolute Unchangeableness of his Nature teaches us, that what he once willed, he always willed ; and what he once understands, he always did understand ; otherwise it can never be true, that *he is without Variableness or Shadow of Turning.* James i. 17.

Therefore it seems contrary to all regular Conceptions of the Deity, to suppose that he continually puts forth fresh Acts of his Will towards and concerning his Creatures : This supposes him to be as changeable as his Creatures, and that his Will is determined by, and subservient to, the Wills and Conditions of his Creatures.

'Tis true, we are ready at first Thought to conceive, that when we repent, a fresh Act of the Divine Will is put forth concerning our Pardon ; when we are in Distress, that a fresh Act of Compassion is excited in his Mind to engage him to send Relief ; and that when we pray aright, a fresh Act of the Divine Will is put forth, determining him to give us what we ask. These and many other such Kind of Apprehensions we are too prone to receive and indulge ; because we are forgetful of the Divine Immutability ; and thus we are in Danger of making the great JEHOVAH altogether such a one as ourselves. I acknowledge, that the Conditions and Circumstances

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cumstances of Man might be changed, and so the Creature may bear a different Relation to the Holiness and Justice of God at different Seasons ; and it must be confess'd, that the Great JEHOVAH may and does put forth fresh Acts of *Power* upon his Creatures, without any Infringement upon his Immutability, or any of his other Perfections ; but his Mind and Will must not be supposed to be changed. So that 'tis a just Observation of some Divines, that when God is said to repent, *he wills a Change, but does not change his Will* : For that remains the same from all Eternity.

Now since there is such Abundance of Phrases, which seem to ascribe to the Deity changeable Affections and a changing Will ; the Question is : *What Conceptions ought we to have under such Expressions ?* When God is said to *justify* and *condemn* us, to *love* and *bate* us, to *bear our Prayers* or *refuse* them, to have his *Bowels troubled* for us, or to *with-hold his tender Mercies from us* at different Seasons ; what are we to learn by such Representations, in a Consistency with

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the Simplicity and Immutability of his Nature ?

Now (1) I dare not look upon them as merely expressive of the Acts of the Divine Will : Because those Acts are eternal ; whereas these Phrases intimate that what is meant by them commences in Time. The Acts of the Divine Will are all unchangeable, whereas these Expressions denote a great Variety of Alterations at different Seasons.

Neither (2) can I refer them to something that may be supposed in the Divine Being, similar to Affections in us ; tho' without that Perturbation that is in our animal Frame. For such a Conception either means Nothing at all, or else it is an Infringement upon our most just Conceptions of the Immutability and Simplicity of the Divine Nature. It is the Business of one that is searching for Ideas of these great Points, to take special Care that his Apprehensions be in some Degree clear, and manifestly consistent with our primary Notions
of

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of the Deity : And how any changeable Affections can in any Sense be ascribed to him, without supposing him a compounded and mutable Being, is very difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to conceive : For so far as the former is allowed, so far the latter must be inferr'd. Neither

(3) Dare I refer such Phrases merely to Acts of the Divine *Power*. One would think that all the Actings of God towards his Creature, must be reduced either to those of his *Will*, or those of his *Power*. But these Expressions cannot *probably* denote Acts of his *Will*, for the Reasons above mentioned. But what are they then ? Acts of his *Power* ? No surely ; for if we conceive this, we shall make a great many of them signify Nothing at all. Is Justification or Remission of Sin an Act of Power ? Is God's imputing or non-imputing Sin an Act of Power ? His compassionating our Miseries, and his considering our Requests, and accepting our Persons and Services, are these Acts of his *Power* ? A vast Variety of such Phrases
may

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may here be introduced, concerning which we dare not say, they express or intend Acts of Will or Power. Not Acts of *Power*, as appears from the very Nature and Form of the Expressions ; nor Acts of the Divine *Will*, which are all eternal and unchangeable. I am sensible that they have been called Expressions after the Manner of Men ; and so they are indeed : But this being allow'd, I ask, do they signify Something or Nothing ? That they intend Nothing cannot be granted ; for the Frequency and Strength of such Expressions plainly intimate to us, that they have an important Reality under them. And if they signify Something ; what is that Something ; since we cannot properly say, that they intend Divine Acts either of Will or Power ? Thus the Question before us is stated, and a very important one it is ; extending to such Subjects as every one of us have the greatest Concern with. Surely Justification and Condemnation before God, his Love and Hatred, his Favour and Anger, are Things of no small Moment :

Oh !

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Oh! that they did lie with suitable Weight upon our Minds and Consciences; for we all allow that his Loving-kindness is better than Life, and his Indignation is worse than Death.

The Answer to this Question in its several Branches will lead us into the Consideration of two general Subjects, which naturally divides the Whole into two PARTS. (1) Concerning the Nature of the Covenants themselves. (2) Concerning the Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace.

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P A R T I.

*Concerning the Nature of the Covenants
themselves.*

C H A P I.

*The Scheme opened and applied to the State of
Nature and Guilt.*



FOR the Reasons above mentioned, and others that might be named, I judge it necessary to seek after some farther Ideas to explain these Matters by. And upon a serious Consideration, I hope what is here proposed may give some farther Light and a clear Satisfaction. I know not how to convey these Ideas better, than by
beginning

Thoughts on such Scripture Phrases, &c. 11

beginning upon this Subject where the Scripture begins. Let us then look into the Dealings of God with our first Parents.

When God had created Man holy and upright, he said to him, Gen. ii. 17. *But of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat of it ; for in the Day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* This was a Part of the Covenant, made and establish'd between God and Man. Now the necessary Consequence of this Establishment is, that as soon as *Adam* broke in upon this Prohibition, and so sinned against God, he was dead in Law ; really condemned to Death ; and from that very Moment was under a legal Obligation to suffer the Penalty annexed.

Soon after he had broken this Covenant, we find that the Lord himself comes and actually pronounces the Sentence of Condemnation upon him, and in him upon all his natural Posterity. (Indeed this was attended with gracious Mitigations.) But it is proper

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per here carefully to distinguish between his actual Condemnation by Virtue of the Covenant, and God's pronouncing the Sentence upon him. This latter God did by his own Mouth, and may be called, not an Act of his Will or Power, but an Act of his *Word*; speaking, pronouncing, or denouncing that which was before included in the Covenant itself. Now observe, that before the Sentence was pronounced, Man was actually condemned, or subject to the Penalty, and under the Curse of this broken Law. Now here I would take the Liberty to ask; what this actual Condemnation was. Was it an Act of Divine *Will* or *Power*?

Not an Act of divine Power; for we do not find that God did immediately execute the Threatning upon him. And farther, Tho' the divine Power was exerted in inflicting the Penalty, yet it cannot be properly said to be exerted in the Act of Condemnation itself.---Neither on the other Hand, can it be properly called an Act of the Divine *Will*, in such a Sense as to suppose,
that

that the Divine Being now willed that which he did not will before. No Doubt, God had from Eternity proposed to create Man in such a State as he actually did ; and to make such an Establishment between Man and himself, and to deal with Man according to the Substance and Form of it. The most I think that can be made of it is this : That *Adam's* actual Condemnation was the necessary Result of the Settlement that was made with him ; which determined that the Day he sinned he should die. It necessarily followed upon this Constitution that the very Day, yea and Moment in which he sinned he was legally dead. Now here it is acknowledged, that *Adam* did *meritoriously* condemn himself ; but he was condemned by this Constitution *judicially* ; And forasmuch as this Establishment itself was *Divine*, it may be very properly said that *God* condemned him. Now this Divine Act (if it may be so termed) has a very great and awful Reality in it ; tho', properly speaking, and in itself considered, it was neither an Act of the Divine *Will*

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nor *Power*. I think this is what we call a *relative Change* ; whereby God stands in a different Relation to the Creature, and the Creature in a different Relation to him. Before Sin, God stood in the Relation of a Friend ; after Sin, he stands in the Relation of an Enemy ; before Sin, the Creature Man was in the Divine Favour ; after Sin he fell under the Divine Wrath and the Curse of his Law.

Now since all Mankind are naturally under this Law of Creation, and Constitution of Works ; must we not say, that the actual Condemnation of the Sinner comes upon him from God, by or thro' this Establishment ? And does not this shew us what is properly meant by the *Imputation of Sin*, by *God's judging the Sinner*, by *his being angry with Sinners every Day*, and by *the Wrath of God abiding upon them*. Especially since the Apostle plainly insinuates, that the proper Imputation of Sin is by the Law ; when he says, Rom. v. 13. *Sin is not imputed when there is no Law*. May we not

not conceive of all such Kind of Scripture-phrases in this Manner, without infringing in the least upon the Divine Unchangeableness? Is there any Necessity to carry these Matters any higher? And surely 'tis a very awful, humbling, convincing Reality, to be bound by the Divine Constitution, under which we all are by Nature, to undergo the Penalty due for Sin. And is this the real State of the Case, and should not this excite every one to look into this Law, and see what it says concerning us? For we may be sure with the Apostle *Paul*, Gal. iii. 10. That *every one that is under the Law is under the Curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the Things written in the Book of the Law to do them.* Nothing short of a perfect, personal and perpetual Obedience can keep off this Curse from us, while we are under the Law; and can we think then to be justified by it before God? Is there any Hope for us according to this Covenant? Let us not be thoughtless about our Guilt, and Misery and Danger by the Law, lest we

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should

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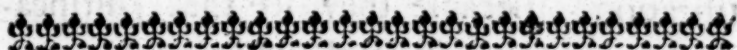
should be tempted to slight the Grace of the Gospel, and so perish without Remedy.

Let me now venture to carry this same Idea a Step or two farther. If all Mankind are in the Sense above explained, by Nature under the Curse of the Law and the Wrath of God ; it necessarily follows from the above Principles, that God is more or less angry with different Sinners, or with the same Sinners at different Times. For this Divine Constitution of Works binds Persons over to various Degrees of Punishment, in exact Proportion to their Crimes. The Sinfulness, Multitude and Aggravations of Sins are all under the Cognizance of the Law of Works. Now since there are Sins of various Degrees of Aggravation, and Sinners of various Sorts ; it is clear, that this same Law or Constitution does bind them over to several Degrees of Punishment. There need be conceived no Alteration in the Divine Will, no Change in the Divine Constitution, nor
at

at present any apparent Difference in the Divine Dealings towards Sinners, in order to account for different Degrees of Guilt or Obligation to Punishment. As Sinners do more or less transgress, so their Guilt is more or less increased. And thus there are, what we may call different Relations constituted between God and the Sinner, tho' all of them are subservient both in Order of Nature and Time, unto a State of Condemnation. Let me add to this, the Consideration of those Perfections of the Deity, that do most principally relate to, and discover themselves in this Constitution, such as his *Wisdom*, *Holiness*, *Justice*, and *Faithfulness*. And then it will appear that every Sin casts a Reproach upon his *Wisdom*, is offensive to his *Holiness*, is provoking to his *Justice*, and is an Engagement to the Divine *Faithfulness* to inflict the Punishment threatned. Now considering this Law as the Result of the Divine Will, and these Perfections as so strictly related hereunto ; and will not this give us the Conceptions we ought to have of God's

Anger being kindled, or of his being more or less *provoked to Anger*, and such like Expressions. And all this may be conceived, without supposing any Impressions to be made upon the Divine Being himself, or any Change made in his Will, or any Alteration in his Law. All that is supposed is this ; that God does, by or thro' this Constitution of Works, actually bind a Person over to Punishment answerable to his Crimes ; and that every Crime is of such a Nature, as to be actually offensive or contrary to the Divine Holiness ; his Justice and Faithfulness at the same Time, as it were, engaging him to act towards the Sinner agreeable to the Tenor and Form of this his Law and its Sanction. And to conclude this Head, I would observe, That this Divine Settlement is the Rule of God's Judgment concerning the State and Deserts of all Persons that are under the Law of Works, and is the Rule of his Actions towards them both in Time and to Eternity, if they remain under the Power and Rule of this Constitution, or so long

as they do remain so. Thus it appears that there is a very solemn Reality in the Divine Resentment. *Who knows the Power of his Anger? even according to his Fear so is his Wrath.* 'Tis a Thing not to be trifled with. God will make every Sinner know that his Sins are as sinful in their Nature, as the Law or Covenant of Works declares them to be. They shall know this either by a true Conviction of Sin here, or by the Fire of God's Wrath hereafter.



C H A P II.

The Scheme pursued and applied to the State of Grace and Justification.

LET us now leave this dark and awful Subject, and turn our Thoughts to the Meaning of Phrases of a different and opposite Nature ; and see whether by the same general Thought, we cannot receive a clear Apprehension of the Nature of Pardon and Justification ; the Non-imputation of Sin, and the Imputation of Righteousness.

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teousness. Now if the Nature of *Condemnation* can be thus explained by referring it to a Covenant of *Works* ; surely the Nature of *Justification* may be explained by referring it to the Covenant of *Grace* : And that without supposing any fresh Act of the Divine Will, and without destroying the Reality and Importance of this Blessing. I am apprehensive, that 'tis for Want of a due Attention to this, that some Divines have been led into the Notion of an eternal Justification. Because they see that Justification is not an Act of the Divine Power ; therefore they at once assert that 'tis absolutely an Act of the Divine Will, and therefore immanent and eternal. Surely we ought to take the Scripture for our Rule in this, as well as in all other Points of a Spiritual Nature ; and endeavour to receive such an Idea of Justification, as is consistent with the Scripture Account of it. It is acknowledged, that the Divine Word speaks of God's eternal Love, of Persons being *chosen in Christ before the Foundation of the World* ; of *Grace being given us in Christ before the World began*. But the Scripture

Scripture never uses the Words *Justification* or *Condemnation* ; *Imputation of Sin* or *Righteousness* ; when it speaks of any eternal Act of the Divine Will. Justification, in the Scripture Sense of the Word, is always express'd to be by Faith, and the Non-imputation of Sin is express'd as future, *Rom. iv. 8. Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin.* And so is the Imputation of Righteousness, *Rom. iv. 23, 24. Now it was not written for his Sake alone, that it was imputed to him : but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, &c.* Besides, Persons might as well be said to be condemned from Eternity, and to have Sin imputed to them before committed, and before they exist, as to suppose that they are justified from Eternity.

But not to enter any farther into this Controversy in this Place, I will endeavour from the foregoing Principles, to explain what Conceptions we ought to form of *Justification, Imputation,* and the like, without

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without making them eternal Acts; and without infringing upon the Immutability of the Divine Nature and Will.

The Foundation of these Acts of Grace is the Suretyship of Christ, and his perfect Obedience and full Satisfaction to the Law as a Surety. Thus Christ has fundamentally removed the Curse of the Law, and has obtained that eternal Life for the Elect, which the Law promised on Condition of perfect Obedience. But 'tis not my proper Business here to lay open and enlarge upon this Subject: All that I have to take Notice of now is, That upon this solid Foundation, a new *Constitution* is settled; which determines who are justified, and when they are justified according to it; and gives us proper Ideas of the Nature and Time, of the Manner and Foundation of Justification. Now here observe, That as *Condemnation* consists in an Obligation to Punishment, according to the Covenant of Works; so *Pardon*, or the Non-imputation of Sin, consists in the dissolving that Obligation, according to the Covenant of Grace;
and

and as Condemnation passes upon the Creature, as soon as he is a Sinner, so Justification passes upon us as soon as we are vitally united to Christ, the Head of this new Covenant: And if we may conceive of the former, without any Infringement upon the Divine Immutability, in the same Sense we may conceive of the latter. So that Pardon, or the Non-imputation of Sin is an Act of God, by, through, and according to this gracious Constitution; actually dissolving the legal Obligation to Punishment for Sin.

And as to the Imputation of Righteousness, it stands thus.

As soon as any Person is in Christ, really, vitally united to him; God does, by or thro' this gracious Establishment, actually impute the Righteousness of Christ unto him. The Substance of this Settlement, as it is reveal'd to us, is, that *by Christ all that believe are justified, while he that believeth not is condemned already, and the Wrath of God abideth on him*, Acts xiii. 19.

John

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John iii. 18, 36. Consequently as soon as ever a Person has Faith, and not before, he is justified by this Constitution, and by God thro' it.

Justification is the most important *relative* Change, that can pass upon us in this Life. And for a further and clearer Conception of this Matter, it is proper for me to show how the *real* Change made in us by the Divine Power, and this *relative* Change made upon us thro' the Divine Covenant, commence together. And upon the Whole it will appear, that they are two very different Consequences, flowing from one and the same Divine Act.

Two Similitudes, both of them Scriptural, will, I hope, clear up this Point. The one is the Relation between the Creator and the Creature, the other is the Relation between a Father and a Son.

As to the first. It is plain, that God in the Act of Creation, did not only constitute the *Being*, but likewise the *Relation* of
the

the Creature to him. Strictly speaking, 'tis not the Creature's having Existence that constitutes its Relation to God; but it is its having received its Being *from God* as its Creator, that constitutes this Relation. So when we are created a-new in Christ Jesus, 'tis not, strictly speaking, our having a new Nature that constitutes a fresh Relation; but our having this new Nature from God in Christ: So that this one Act of God infers a new Nature and a new Relation too. And forasmuch as this new Creation is done in *Jesus Christ*, here is constituted at once an actual Relation to Christ, a Union with him and a special Interest in him. God exerts his almighty Power as a God in Christ by the new Covenant; so that when the Work is performed, the renewed Soul is related to Christ in a different Manner from what it was before.

The other Similitude is that of a Father and Son.

When a Man begets a Son, he is at once the Instrument of conveying the human
D Nature

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Nature and of producing the Relation. The Child's being of the human Nature, fits him for enjoying the Father's Estate, and the Child's being *his proper Son* is the Ground of his Right and Title to it. Thus when God by his Spirit regenerates any of us, he does two Things by this one Act; he produces the regenerated Nature in us, and constitutes the spiritual Relation of Sonship. And may not all this be so referred to the Covenant of Grace as to show that at Regeneration, a relative as well as a real Change is made, without supposing any Alteration in the Divine Mind and Will? For it is clear, that a new Nature being thus implanted, and a new spiritual Union commencing; the Nature and Form of the Covenant of Grace establish and constitute a new spiritual Relation. And what is this new Relation? Surely it is such as includes in it the Non-imputation of Sin, and the Imputation of Righteousness. God has established this Covenant of Grace, he thus brings us from under the Law or Power of the Covenant of Works, and thus brings us under the Covenant of Grace :

Grace: And this gracious Establishment is such as necessarily infers, that all under it are discharged from legal Obligation to Punishment, have an Interest in the perfect Attonement and Righteousness of Christ, and have a Right to all the Privileges of the Sons of God. All this therefore is done, without the least Change in the Divine Will, and yet the most important Alteration is made in our State and Relation towards God.

Upon the whole then we see, that a new Nature and a new State commence together. The new Nature is formed by the divine immediate Power, the new State arises from the Relation that this new Nature bears unto this gracious Establishment, which determinates every regenerate believing Soul to be pardoned, justified, and adopted. But to prevent all Mistakes, if possible, let me endeavour to show distinctly how much this important Change amounts to.

(1) A Person's passing from a State of
Condemnation, to that of Justification, does

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not suppose that the secret Purposes of God are changed concerning him. We must not say, that before a Person is justified, God absolutely determined to condemn him and make him miserable for ever ; but that he is condemned by that Law of Works which he is under. And when a Person is justified, there is no fresh Decree passes for his Salvation ; for every one that is justified in Time was chosen to Salvation from Eternity ; and that Purpose is not revoked when the elect Soul is under Condemnation by the Law, nor renewed or reassumed when he comes to be justified by the free Grace of God. In this Regard, an elect Person is as safe before Justification as after it.

(2) In Consequence of this, when a Person's State is thus altered, we must not suppose, that the Attonement of Christ was not made for him, and the Righteousness of Christ was not wrought out for him, as much before as after his Justification. It is as true of an elect Soul, when under actual Condemnation by the Law, that Christ paid the full Price of *his* Redemption, as it is true

true of him after his Justification. So that in this View we must say, that Justice was satisfied, Divine Wrath appeased, the Divine Law magnified for all the Elect by Christ, whether they lived under the Old Testament, or do or shall under the New Testament Dispensation. Upon this perhaps you will be ready to say, that if both the Purpose of God and the Purchase of Christ secure the Salvation of every elect Soul, surely there can no such important Change pass upon their State before God; and therefore we will refer all the Alteration that is made, to the Declaration of the Divine Word, or to the Manifestation of Divine Love to the Conscience: But here I must observe,

(3) That this Change of State cannot consist merely in the Declaration of it by the Word of God. I know that some look upon the Words Justification and Pardon as merely forensic Terms; and so they conceive that this great Change consists merely in a denouncing or pronouncing a Person to be discharged from an Obligation to

Punishment, and to have a Right to eternal Life by Christ. I acknowledge that there is this in Justification ; that the Divine Word does pronounce a Sentence of Absolution upon every Believer. But surely to be discharged from Guilt by the Covenant of Grace is more than a mere verbal Alteration. For if this be all, it was as true before it was declared as after ; but this the Scripture contradicts ; for it tells us, that *he that believeth not, is condemned already and the Wrath of God abideth on him ;* which must be as true, as that *all that believe are justified.* So that, according to the Sentence of the Word, which must have a Reality under it, every Believer is justified, and every Unbeliever is condemned ; and surely real Justification and Condemnation declared, are different from the bare Declaration thereof. Neither,

(4) Can this important Change consist merely in the Manifestation of it to the Conscience. For a Change must be supposed to be past before it is manifested. Now when the Spirit of God begins to work in a
Way

Way of Conviction, he gives the Soul a real Belief that he is condemned, under the Wrath of God and the Curse of the Law, which therefore must be a Truth concerning him ; and it is not every justified and renewed Soul that is convinced in his Conscience that he is in the Favour of God ; so that in this Sense he is not justified. Since then this great Change does not consist in the Manifestation of God's Love to the Conscience, nor barely in the Denunciation of the Divine Word ; and since it is not such a Change as alters the Purpose of God or the Purchase of Christ, you will ask what is it ? I answer. Consider every Unbeliever as under the Law, and every Believer as under Grace : View the former as actually lying under the Covenant of Works, and the latter as actually introduced into the Covenant of Grace ; and then you will see wherein this Change consists. God determines to deal with every Unbeliever, as such ; according to the Tenor of the first Covenant, and to deal with every Believer according to the Tenor of the second Covenant ; and consequently every unre-

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unregenerate Soul, according to this Rule, is liable to eternal Misery ; and every new-born Soul, according to this Rule, has a Right to the Blessings purchased by Christ. This general Rule of God's Dealings is revealed in his Word, while he reserves it as a Secret in his own Breast, whom he determines to leave under the Curse of the Law, and whom he determines to bring into a State of Justification by his free Grace.

The Judgment that each of us ought to pass upon ourselves, should be according to the Sentence of the Divine Word, and *we are sure the Judgment of God is according to Truth.* If his Word condemns us, we are condemned ; if his Word pronounces a Sentence of Pardon and Justification upon us, we are pardoned and justified. The secret Will of God is neither the Rule of our Duty, nor the Ground of our Hope ; nor, in the Scripture Sense, the Determination of our State : But it is his revealed Will that declares the Rule of his Dealings towards Mankind ; and so determines what State we are in before him, and what we
are

are to expect from him. 'Tis according as *this* decides the Case we are actually dealt with now, and shall be judged hereafter.

Whatever can be said or must be allowed concerning the eternal Election, and fundamental Redemption of any Persons now in a State of Nature, it is very clear, that their Condition in themselves, and their State before God, as in the Covenant of Works or Grace, is vastly different from and opposite to the State and Condition of those that are regenerated. A plain Description of this will at once show how vastly momentous this real and relative Change is.

Concerning every unregenerate Person, whether Elect or Non-elect, it must be said of him, that the Threatnings of the Law stand in full Force against him, and are directly pointed at him : That the Law under which he is cannot save him, but absolutely condemns him ; he is in the greatest Danger of eternal Misery, according to all that can be known by him, felt in him,
or

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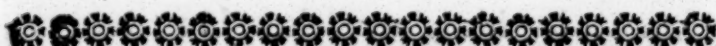
or understood concerning him : Every fresh Sin brings fresh legal Guilt upon him, and lays in fresh Matter for legal Terror, either in this World by legal Conviction, or in the next by everlasting Torments. There is no Hope of Salvation for him in his present State ; and if he dies in it, he must perish for ever. He is dealt with by God as a condemned Malefactor, as a bond Slave under the Curse. No special, real Blessings are bestowed upon him ; no Afflictions are blest to him in this State, and his very Prosperity is cursed.

And is not this a dreadful Situation ? Every one of these Particulars, and many more that might be mentioned, are true of every unconverted Person ; and whether he be elect or no, this makes no Alteration.

On the other Hand, it must be said, that not one of these Particulars are true of a regenerated Person ; but directly the contrary must be asserted concerning him. He is not under the Law, but under Grace : None of the Threatnings of the Law stand
in

in Force against him : All the substantial saving Promises of the Gospel belong to him : The Covenant under which he is, does not condemn him, but certifies and ensures his Salvation. Many Things may be known by him, are felt in him, and declared concerning him, which assure, that he shall be saved from Wrath, and is in no Danger of eternal Misery. The fresh Sins he commits do not bring upon him the Guilt of *eternal Wrath*, only the Guilt of *fatherly Anger*. There is Hope and Assurance of Salvation for him in his present State ; and when he comes to die, he receives the End of his Faith and Justification, even the Salvation of his Soul. God, in all his Dealings, acts towards him as a justified Person, and a beloved Son : His Afflictions are sanctified ; his **P**rosperity blest ; all Things work together for his Good. Let every one seriously consider these Things, and see whether this is not a most desirable and important Alteration. Take the Word of God as your Rule to judge what your real State is, and let the same Word be consulted, to see how miserable,

able, wretched, and dangerous your State is, if you have not truly believed ; and how happy and safe it is, if you have believed thro' Grace.



CHAP III.

Several condescending Phrases that relate to the different Conditions of those in a State of Grace, explained.

HAVING thus unfolded the general Nature of Condemnation by an Establishment of Works, and the Nature of Justification by an Establishment of Grace; I would here proceed to observe, that this same gracious Settlement, not only relates to a Believer's Introduction into a State of Pardon, Justification, and Adoption, but it extends itself likewise to all the Relations and Situations of the Believer subordinate to a State of Grace.

Tho' a Believer, according to this Settlement, is always in the same general Relation

Relation to God, as a justified, adopted Person ; yet we know that a Child of God is at different Seasons, more or less holy or sinful as to his Soul, and is in different Situations of Affliction or Prosperity as to his Body and Circumstances. Let us now see how this gracious Constitution stands related to these Things. When a Believer falls into Sin, tho' he does not lose his Sonship, yet he must now stand under the Character of a rebellious and disobedient Child of God ; and accordingly, God in such a Case is represented in Scripture as an *affronted and angry Father*. Now observe, that we must not and need not suppose any real Impressions to be made upon the Divine Mind, or any Alteration in the Divine Will, or any real Motions of Anger and Resentment. But upon the whole we must observe, that God in the Covenant of Grace is determined to deal with such a Believer, in a Manner similar to the Dealings of a Father with a disobedient Son. This being a settled general Rule in the Covenant, it follows, that as soon as ever a Child of God proves disobedient, he, according to

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this

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this Settlement, becomes liable to be dealt with as such ; he acts an ungrateful and provoking Part, and the Relation of a gracious Father seems to intimate some Repentment, and to require some Chastisement ; and the Wisdom and Love of God, as a Father, directs him how to deal suitable to that Relation. Now the Believers becoming liable to fatherly Chastisement, may be look'd upon as a subordinate relative Change : And is not this what we are to understand by God's *fatherly Anger*, of which actual Chastisement is the Effect ? For the Sins of Believers are in their own Nature displeasing, provoking and ungrateful to God as a Father ; for which he, according to his gracious Relation to them, is determined to chastise and correct them.

If our being condemned by the Covenant of Works, be called *our having the Wrath of God abiding on us* ; why might not a Believer's being actually liable to fatherly Chastisement, be as properly called *God's being angry with him*, as a Father is with a disobedient Son.

Farther,

Farther, When a Child of God is actually under his Father's Rod, and in a penitential Frame ; now he stands in the same Relation to God, as an afflicted, penitent Son does to his Father, and consequently has a Certainty, by this gracious Establishment, that God will deal with him similar to the Dealings of a temporal Father in a like Case. Now here it is to be remarked, that every Relation of this Kind is mutual ; so that it follows hence, that while a Son of God stands in the Relation of an afflicted penitent Son to his Father, God stands in the Relation of a compassionate Father to his Son. Accordingly, he is in Scripture set forth, as *pitying his Children, as having his Bowels troubled for them, graciously pardoning them, and the like.* Not that there are really any such Motions, Changes and Affections in the Divine Mind and Will, as these Expressions seem to intimate ; but only that God, as in Covenant, stands in the same View and Relation to his People, as a temporal Father does, who actually has these Motions and Affections in his

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Heart in such Circumstances ; and that the Divine Grace and Goodness, which are displayed in this Covenant, do engage him to act towards his penitent afflicted Children in a tender and loving Manner, suitable to this gracious condescending Relation. And does not this Thought give a proper and sufficient Reality to such condescending Expressions ? Once more. God is represented as *a God hearing Prayer* ; accordingly it is said of him, that *he considers the Petitions of his People, bends his Ear to their Requests, hearkens to their Complaints, &c.* And may not all such Expressions be conceived of and explained in the same Way ? It would be preposterous to argue from such Phrases, that the Great JEHOVAH has properly Eyes and Ears, to see and hearken. But thus far is plain from Scripture. That it is a settled Rule in the Covenant of Grace, that God will deal with his praying People, in a Way similar to that of a kind Father with his praying Son. So that God really is, in and by the Covenant, in the same Relation to a praying Believer, as a tender Father is to his Son. Not when it is clear, that as soon as ever

a true Prayer is conceived in the Heart by the Spirit, and poured out before the Lord, even before any actual Grace is given in Answer ; such a prayerful Soul has a special Right to be dealt with according to the Covenant and Promises thereof, in this Respect ; and God looks upon himself as obliged by his Faithfulness and Love, to fulfil these Promises upon the praying Believer, in such Time and Way as his infinite Wisdom judges best and most suitable. And surely a Believer may humbly look upon God in this View thro' the Covenant, and plead with God and encourage himself accordingly.

I might proceed to carry this Idea into a Variety of other Particulars of this Kind : But the general Thought being thus far opened and particularized, this seems sufficient for a general Clue, whereby to understand many other condescending Phrases, and to receive regular and consistent Conceptions of them.

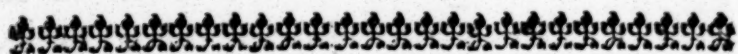
What shall we say to these Things ? Is there such a standing Relation between God

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and his People by the Covenant of Grace, that there can be no Condemnation to them; how should this establish Believers in their Faith and Hope, and enliven them in their Duties?

And are there such a Variety of Relations between them and him, subordinate to and consistent with the State of Justification; what a View does this give of the Sinfulness of Sin in Believers, and how careful and circumspect should they be in their Walk before God, that they might not provoke their gracious Father to Anger, nor oblige him to chastise them, by outward Afflictions, or inward Withdrawments? Surely those that are in the Covenant of Grace are under the strongest Obligations to holy Obedience, from the Relation in which God stands to them, as well as from the Authority he has over them. A careless Believer is the most ungrateful Person in the World; and such a one must expect some severe Chastisement. *Psal.* lxxxix. 30—33.

C H A P.



C H A P IV.

*The general Idea of a Divine Establishment,
confirmed and illustrated.*

I Hope what has been said, will be found sufficient to explain the real Meaning and Importance of such condescending Phrases; since it does by no Means infringe upon the Unchangeableness of the Divine Nature and Will; and since it exhibits a proper and substantial Reality under these Phrases. Thus far I think I may venture to say, that I have not intruded into Things that are not seen, nor introduced an Idea which the Nature of Things and the Scriptures of Truth give no Ground for. It might be doubted, and ought to be denied, that God does properly put forth fresh Acts of his Will, and that he has Affections in him similar to those in us. But this I apprehend cannot be doubted; namely, that God has, by the Covenants of Works and Grace, declared and established a Rule
of

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of his own Actions towards Men in all their various Circumstances. For otherwise, the Promises and Threatnings of the Divine Word stand for very little.

Now as this Establishment is the Rule according to which God does and will act towards his Creatures ; so it is this must determine the several Relations in which God stands to us in our several Circumstances. And indeed what is a great Part of the Scriptures, but a plain, open, design'd Declaration of the Divine Will in this View of it. So that upon any Alterations made in us, either by our own Sins or God's Grace, we stand in different Relations to this Rule and Establishment of his ; and according to it we are either justified or condemned, Children of Wrath, or Sons of God ; and are to be dealt with as Persons either loved or hated, received or rejected, Friends or Enemies. And thus all these relative Changes are made upon us, without any Alteration in the Divine Mind or Will.

And

And let it be farther observed, that God has declared, that he will deal with Man according to his own Establishment. He will deal with unconverted Persons as such, according to the Settlement of Works ; and with converted Persons according to the Settlement of Grace. And if this be the View in which God appears to us in his Word, no Wonder that we must look upon him as standing in such different Relations to us, in our different Circumstances. These Things being thus settled, is it any Wonder that God makes Use of Terms and Phrases, borrowed from similar Relations between Man and Man, in order to convey to us the Idea of our State and Relation towards him. It is universally acknowledged, that most of these Expressions are spoken after the Manner of Men ; and the Great God has taken Care in the Descriptions he gives of himself, that we should not conceive of him as altogether such a one as ourselves. And now, what more or what less than what has been described, can be the real Meaning of such Phrases.

If

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If we sink the Meaning lower, we do not give a proper Reality and Importance to them; and if we raise it any higher, we shall infringe upon the Simplicity of the Divine Nature, and the Immutability of the Divine Will.

I would here observe, that this general Idea of a Settlement, Establishment, or Constitution, is not only to be gathered from the Promises and Threatnings of the Word, but is, as I apprehend, plainly intended by several Scripture Words and Phrases. Has not every Divine *Law, Statute, Ordinance, Decree*, the Nature of a Constitution in it? And how full is this Idea express'd concerning the Old Testament Dispensation, Psal. lxxviii. 5. *He established a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel.* And it seems exceedingly probable to me, that that the Word COVENANT has this Signification under it, and is to be explained best in this Way.

The Word *Covenant*, as it sounds in the *English* Tongue, seems in its strict Sense, to be

be confined to a proper voluntary Compact and Agreement between two or more Persons, upon certain Conditions. And it is acknowledged, that it is sometimes found in this Sense in Scripture; but 'tis very clear, that this Word is frequently used, where there is no such voluntary Contract. Sometimes it signifies merely a settled Ordinance and Appointment. *Jer.* xxxiii. 20, 21, 25. where God's Covenant with the Day and Night is spoken of. Sometimes it intends a bare absolute Promise, *Gen.* ix. 11. where the Promise, that there should no more be a Flood to destroy the Earth, is called a *Covenant*. And thus the Covenant made with *Abraham* and his Seed was a pure absolute Promise; and thus the Covenant of the Redeemer and his Seed was a mere Promise, as express'd, *Isai.* lix. 21. Sometimes it intends merely a Set of Precepts, *Deut.* iv. 13. where God is said to declare his Covenant, which he commanded *Israel* to perform, even the Ten Commandments. And lastly, it signifies a last Will and Testament, *Heb.* ix. 16, 17. Now it is easy to observe, that all these fe-
veral

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veral Senses, are involved in this one of an Establishment. For every Contract that is made, every Promise given, every Precept injoin'd, and every Testament confirmed, have all the Nature of a Settlement or Constitution. Take this then to be the true Meaning of this Word *Covenant*, and you find that this Signification of it will stand clear and unimbarassed, wherever this Word is found in the Old or New Testament. And may we not suppose, that this is the Force of the original Words ברית in *Hebrew*, and Διαθήκη in *Greek*? The Etymology of the *Greek* Word for Covenant seems to determine its Meaning to be a Constitution: And the *Hebrew* Word, (whether it be derived from ברה to choose, or from ברא to create or constitute) will bear the same general Signification. However, every Covenant, whether it signifies a Compact, a Promise, or a last Will, is a Settlement.

The Covenant of Works was an Establishment, which God made with Man in Innocency, wherein he determined that Man should

should have everlasting Life, upon Condition of perfect Obedience, or be liable to Death upon a Failure in it. Whether you suppose any mutual Stipulation, or Restipulation, or no ; it had the Nature of a Covenant in this Sense of the Word. As for the Covenant of Grace, this is an Establishment that is threefold. Consider the Covenant of Grace as between the Father and Son, and it was an Settlement by Way of Compact : Consider it as between God and us, and 'tis a Settlement by Way of absolute Promise : Consider it as between Christ and us, and it was a Settlement by Way of last Will and Testament.

But still farther to illustrate this general Subject, I would here take Occasion to show, how properly every relative Alteration that is made upon us, and arises from the Divine Establishment, may be called a Divine Act ; tho', properly speaking, the making of this relative Change is neither an Act of Divine Will nor Power.

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Take therefore these following Observations.

(1) God himself in his eternal Will and Purposes established this general Constitution ; which justifies every Believer and condemns every Unbeliever. He laid out this Plan of his Dealings in his own Mind, and by his own Will from Eternity settled every Particular of it, both as to Believers and Unbelievers. So that this Constitution itself is a Transcript of his eternal Will and Purpose.

(2) All the Perfections of the Deity are engaged in it, so as to approve of it and render it effectual. His Wisdom, Power, Omniscience and Omnipresence are engaged to render it effectual ; that nothing should be wanting to the actual and punctual Fulfilment of all the Promises, or the Execution of the Threatnings contained in it. His Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Faithfulness, have all their Concern herein. This Establishment being once made and declared

clared to Man, shews what is agreeable to the Divine Holiness, or offensive to it ; what is and what is not provoking to Divine Justice ; and sets forth what is really the Divine Will, as to any Person's Justification or Condemnation.

(3) All the Virtue and Efficacy that this Constitution has in making relative Changes upon us arises from this very Property of it, that it is *Divine* ; for if it were not Divine, it could make no relative Alterations between God and us. 'Tis because God himself established it, that we are that *before God* which the Constitution itself determines. Are we according to it justified, this is therefore a Justification *before God* ; are we condemned by it, this is therefore our Condemnation before him.

(4) The holy Scriptures are therefore justly called the *Word of God*, because they declare to us this eternal Settlement of his Mind and Will. So that, as properly as God is said to speak to us by his Word, so properly it may be said, that God justifies

or condemns us, loves or hates us, by or thro' this Divine Establishment.

(5) God is determined to act in every Respect, according to this Constitution. Is any one justified according to it, God will act towards him as a Person justified, accepted, and beloved; is any Person condemned according to it, God does act towards him as such while in that State, and will condemn him for ever if he dies in his Sins : And so in all Cases. Such as this Settlement determines a Man to be, suitable to that God does and will act towards him.

(6) 'Tis God himself by the Power of his Grace and Spirit, that makes the real Change in the Nature and Hearts of his People ; and so brings them into such a Relation to his Establishment, that now they are justified and accepted according to it. This Settlement justifies every Believer : God by his Spirit makes a Person a Believer, and so at once gives him a new Nature and brings him into a new State.

Now

Now take all these six Considerations together in one View, and see whether from hence it will not follow, in the highest Sense possible, that it is a Divine Act to justify us in Time, at believing, by or thro' the Constitution of Grace, altho' there be no fresh Act of Will put forth in it. Do not these Thoughts clearly show, how the real Change by the Divine Power, and the relative Change by the Divine Covenant do commence together, and how there is a very great and important Reality in both ?



C H A P. V.

The Ends answered by this Explication of Things, from a Divine Establishment.

THUS I have attempted to explain the several Relations in which Men stand to God ; both as in a State of Condemnation and Justification ; by referring the whole to the Divine Settlement, or Covenant. Before I proceed to extend this

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general Thought any farther, it may be necessary to show how this Explication tends to answer all those Ends, which are designed by such condescending Phrases of Scripture. The laying forth this, may be looked upon as an instructive and practical Application to this general Subject, so far as we have proceeded in it.

(1) This gives us regular, safe, distinct and noble Conceptions of the Divine Being in his Nature, Perfections and Purposes. As for the Divine Nature, the whole Plan is built upon a Supposition of his being unchangeable and uncompounded in his Essence. I hope no Idea has been conveyed in this Discourse, that does in the least contradict the Immutability and Simplicity of the Great JEHOVAH; altho' its Design has been to explain the Meaning of those Expressions, that seem at first View to suppose him to have a changeable Will, and changeable Affections. This Representation supposes all the real Changes to be in us. As for the *Divine Will and Purposes*, we see from hence that they are all Eternal; that

he did from Eternity determine to deal in this Manner towards his Creatures, in their various Circumstances ; whether the Alterations that are made in them proceed from their own Sins, or from his Grace. And as to his *Perfections*, I may venture to say, that we can have no better, fuller, or more distinct Ideas of them, than what we can gather from the Declaration he has made of this general Establishment. If we would know what Conceptions to entertain of the Nature of his Holiness, Justice, Faithfulness, Wisdom and Goodness, look into the Nature and Frame of this Establishment, and these Perfections will appear in a most noble and beautiful Manner to us.

(2) This Explication of Things gives us a right Idea of the Difference between the secret and revealed Will of God. What we mean by the *secret* Will of God is this. 'Tis the secret Purpose of his Mind, whether he will leave particular Persons to fall into Sin and destroy themselves ; or whether he will by his Spirit and Grace renew them, and bring them into New-Covenant-Relations
to

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to himself. And this secret Purpose may likewise be extended to the sovereign Dealings of his Providence towards particular Persons, Families, or Nations. It is called his *secret* Will, because all such Things remain a Secret, until they are manifested by the Effects of his Power, either in Providence or Grace. The *revealed* Will of God is contained in the Declaration he has made of the Nature, Constitution and Consequences of the Covenants of Works or Grace. It includes the Rules he is determined to act by, towards the Children of Men, in their various Circumstances of Sin or Grace, Holiness or Corruption. The secret Will of God is known only by his Works, his revealed Will may be seen in his Word. The former is so intirely secret and unknown to us in itself, that we never can know what God will do in this Respect until he has done it : The latter is so declared, that we may know by looking into his Word, what we may expect from him, and what Duty he requires of us. The secret Will is neither the Rule of our Duty, nor Ground of our Hope ; whereas the revealed

vealed Will contains both. The revealed Will gives such a Representation of God in Covenant, as tends to work in such a Manner upon our Hearts and Affections, as, by his Spirit, produces a real Change within us: The secret Will determines when and where and how the Spirit will work, to render this Declaration effectual.

(3) The foregoing Representation of Things, plainly gives a full and important Reality to all those Scripture Expressions that it attempts to explain. For it tells us that God will deal with us, according to those Relations, which such condescending Phrases refer to.

If I am under Condemnation according to this Settlement, I may be assured, that God will deal with me as a condemned Person, while I remain in this State. If I am justified according to it, I may be certain, that God will deal with me as a justified Person. If God by the Constitution appears angry with me, I may expect the Tokens of his Displeasure upon me. If he
by

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by the Constitution appears pleased with me, I may expect suitable Favour from him, according to the Promises of his Grace. And thus it stands in all other Cases. And besides this, the Perfections of Holiness, Justice, Goodness and the like, are so necessarily concerned in this Establishment ; that I may say and conceive, that when I sin, Holiness is offended with me, and Justice frowns upon me ; and when by Grace I am enabled to be holy in Heart and Life, Goodness and Love smile upon me thro' Jesus Christ, the Head of the Covenant of Grace.

Consequently (4) This Representation gives real objective Ground for all such Affections in our Minds, as these condescending Expressions tend to excite. If the Scripture says that God loves me, I have the same Ground for Hope and Comfort, as if there really was the strongest Emotion of Indearment in the Divine Mind. If it says he is angry with me, I have the same Ground for Fear and Distress, as if there were such a Passion really and properly in
the

the Divine Mind. For the revealed Will of God assures me, that I must expect to be dealt with suitable to these Representations, and the Perfections of Deity are all engaged to make good these Declarations. And thus the Case stands in all other Instances.

(5) This Description gives us noble and important Ideas of the Covenant of Works and Grace. Forasmuch as these two distinct Covenants or Establishments are the Foundation of all the Relations, in which Men stand to God and he to them; and forasmuch as the Reality contained under all such strong affectionate Representations of God, are to be sought for and found therein. So that the Foundation of our Hopes or Fears stands as firm as the Establishment itself does, under which we are.

(6) It is very observable, that whensoever the Spirit of God makes any Impressions upon the Hearts either of Believers or Unbelievers, they are all gathered from and are agreeable to the Nature and Form
of

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of the Divine Establishment. When the Divine Spirit gives to a Sinner a strong and powerful Sense of his Guilt, of the Wrath of God upon his Person, and of his Liability to that Vengeance that is due to him for his Sins, this is no other than a Representation of God's Justice and Holiness, as appearing in the Covenant of Works. When the Spirit sheds abroad the Love of Christ in the Heart of a Believer, this is Nothing but a Representation of his Love and Favour as in the Covenant of Grace; and the Idea that the believing Soul has of it, is gathered from and centers in the New Covenant, whereby God stands in the most endearing Relations to his People. If the Soul under such Divine Impressions is led to entertain irregular and dishonourable Conceptions of God, as one like ourselves, I hope none will venture to ascribe such Conceptions to the Spirit of Truth. Upon the whole,

(7) Lastly, I apprehend, that what has been said may be improved, to give an Answer to many Questions either of Debate

or

as ascribe Affections to G O D. 61

or Enquiry, upon a solid Foundation and with proper Ideas. Here I would put a few short Queries, and give a short Answer to them.

Question. When do Justification and Adoption actually commence ?

Answer. When a new Nature is implanted, and so by the Divine Settlement, a new Relation produced.

Q. What is the Difference between the Guilt of Sin, in a regenerate and in an unregenerate Person ?

A. The former renders a Person liable to God's *fatherly Anger*, according to the Covenant of Grace : The latter renders him liable to *eternal Wrath*, according to the Covenant of Works.

Q. In what Sense does God pardon the actual Sins of a Believer, after his Justification ?

G

A.

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A. By removing the Guilt of *fatherly Anger*. Before this Pardon, God stands in the Relation, not of a condemning Judge, but of an angry offended Father ; and after this Pardon, God is related to the Believer, as a Father reconciled and well pleased.

Q. When does God pardon this Guilt of the Believer ?

A. When he repents and flies to the Blood of Christ, by a fresh Act of Faith ; for this is the stated Account we have of this Matter in that Word, which declares the Divine Establishment.

Q. When were our Sins actually imputed to Christ ?

A. The very Moment he was actually made under the Law.

Q. When is *Adam's* Sin actually imputed to us ?

A.

A. The very Moment we actually become his Seed and Offspring.

Q. When is Christ's Righteousness actually imputed to us ?

A. As soon as we are actually united to him by Faith.





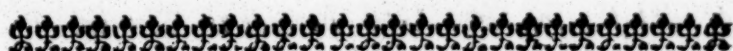
P A R T II.

Concerning the Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace.

THUS I have endeavoured to explain the Nature and Consequences of a Divine Establishment, in order to give clear Ideas, under a great Variety of Scripture Phrases of a condescending Kind ; and I hope that my private Thoughts upon this Subject, being come at length to this Issue, have not been employ'd in vain.

There is another Set of condescending Phrases to be found in Scripture, which appears to be of a different Kind from those already opened. And I conceive that these are to be referred to, and are best explained
by

by the Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, which extends itself to all that are under the Administration of it ; namely, all those that are under the Sound of the Gospel. This is what some call the general Offers of the Gospel, which perhaps may be better termed, The open, free Exhibition of God in Christ, as an Object of Desire, Hope, Love, Trust and Dependence.



C H A P I.

These Phrases mentioned, and the Difficulties attending them set forth.

WHosoever reads the Divine Word with Attention, will easily find a great Abundance of Expressions, that are in their own Nature very affecting, engaging and endearing ; wherein God is represented as speaking to us, and of himself, after the Manner of Men. The principal Tendency of which Phrases, is to work upon our Minds, and lead us to imbrace God

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in Christ, as freely exhibited to us in the
Gospel. I shall here produce the Chief of
them to View.

God is set forth as calling to and invit-
ing Sinners.

Thus God *rises early and sends his Pro-*
phets. Christ stands at the Door and knocks.
God stretches forth his Hands all Day long.
The Apostles are represented as *Ambassadors*
for Christ, so that God beseeches Sinners by
them, and they pray them in Christ's Stead to
be reconciled to God. God pleads and ex-
postulates with his professing People in the
most earnest Manner. *Why will ye die,*
O House of Israel !

God sets forth himself, as earnestly wish-
ing and strongly desiring, that they would
hearken to his Voice. *O that there were in*
them such a Heart ! O that they were wise,
that they understood this and would consider
their latter End ! O that my People had
hearkened to me ! Ps. lxxxix. 13, 14.

God

God is set forth as regretting that they had not fulfilled his Desire, and complaining of them, grieved by them, and as it were, weeping over them. *How long shall vain Thoughts lodge within thee ! How long, ye simple ones, will ye love Simplicity ! Forty Years long was I grieved with this Generation.* And after all Means used, he speaks as if it cut him to the Heart to deliver them up. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ; how shall I deliver thee, Israel ; my Heart is turned within me, my Repentings are kindled together !*

God speaks as if his Expectations were raised and disappointed ; *I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes.* And when they are prevailed upon, he speaks in several Places, as exceedingly pleased and delighted.

I might produce many other Scriptures of the like Nature ; but I think the strongest of all, and that which includes or supposes all the rest, is that Divine Oath mentioned,

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tioned, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked ; but that the Wicked turn from his Way and live : Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil Ways, for why will ye die, O House of Israel !* To all which we may perhaps add such Expressions as these : *God is willing that all should be saved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth ; and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance.*

I am conscious that many of these Phrases have a direct and immediate Regard unto the Covenant of Peculiarity, which subsisted between JEHOVAH and *Israel* ; and as such they have no Regard to a Sinner's Justification and Salvation ; but only to the Welfare of the *Israelites* as a Nation. And some have thought that the Difficulties attending such Passages of sacred Writ, are at once removed by such an Interpretation.

But I conceive, that there is a great Similitude between this Covenant of Peculiarity, and the Dispensation of the Covenant
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of Grace to Sinners : And besides, the Difficulties that attend the clear Interpretation of these Phrases are of such a Nature, that they can be no more removed by referring them to the Covenant of Peculiarity, than by applying them to the Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. For the Absurdities that attend a literal Explication of them are such as these.

1st. Here are strong Passions and Affections ascribed to the Divine Being, which can by no Means be allowed to be strictly and literally true ; since this is inconsistent with the Simplicity and Immutability of the Divine Nature : And thus far the same Difficulty attends the Explication of these Phrases, as did the former ; and from this Consideration, these as well as the other, are proved to be of a condescending Kind. But,

2^{dly}, Could we allow that the great JEHOVAH has Passions in him, similar to those in us, there is a farther Difficulty here ; for many of these Affections are quite dishonourable

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nourable to him ; they strike at the Steadfastness of his Purposes, the Almightyness of his Power, and the Compleatness of his Blessedness, as well as the Simplicity of his Nature. For they seem to intimate as if God wished for, and strove at what he could not attain, and prayed but could not prevail ; as if he were disconcerted in his Schemes, disappointed in his Hopes, and grieved at his Heart. None of which Thoughts can by any Means be admitted as true,

3dly, Such Sentiments represent the Divine Being as inconsistent with himself ; as if there was a real Opposition between his secret and revealed Will. And they do not appear reconcileable to his certain, absolute and universal Foreknowledge. Most of the Difficulties remain as strong upon the Supposition of his Prescience, as of his Predestination. Can we suppose that the Great God really expects and waits for, what he certainly knows will never come to pass ? That he is really grieved and disappointed, when he knows all Things from the Beginning

ning to the End ? When he established the Gospel Constitution, he fully knew that the Consequence would be very awful with Regard to many. And how is it consistent with his Sincerity, to invite and beseech his Creatures, when and where he knows they will never accept ; and how is it consistent with his Veracity and Truth, to tell us that he longs for, waits for, and expects our Recovery, Return and Salvation, when he certainly knows what will be the Event in every Particular ? In these Cases, our first Thoughts are ready to impeach the Divine Sincerity and Integrity ; yea, his Justice and Mercy too.

Yea, I might add 4^{thly}, That these Phrases seem to imply an absolute Will and Power in Man to imbrace these Invitations, to repent and turn to God, and to give the turning Point to his own Salvation : All which Thoughts are contrary to the Doctrines of free and sovereign Grace, to the Impotency of Man, and the absolute Necessity of a special Agency of the Spirit of God. Whereas the Denial of these Truths
is

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is opposite to the plain and full Language of Scripture, and to the inward Experience of those who know themselves a-right.

Now what is wanted is to give and receive such Ideas under these scriptural Phrases, as shall at once avoid all these seeming Inconsistencies, remove these Difficulties, and yet preserve such a Reality under them, as will fully answer the Design of such Expressions. Surely there must be some great and important Reality under such Phrases. Let none make light of them, nor think they are bare Words or empty Sounds. They are so far from any Thing like this, that they contain the greatest objective Ground for a poor Sinner's Hope, the greatest and freest Incouragement for him to fly to the Mercy of God in Christ, and have in them the strongest and most endearing Motives to engage his Concern, to awaken his Attention, and to win upon his Heart. Yea, such great Matter is included in them, that, did but a poor Sinner really see and believe it, he would be

be effectually engaged to come out of himself, to refer himself to the free Grace of God, and would find Relief and Salvation. And this I hope will be made fully to appear in what follows.



C H A P. II.

The general Rule of explaining these Phrases proposed.

THE first Difficulty attending the Meaning of these Expressions, being the same with that which appeared to attend the former Set of Phrases taken Notice of in the first Part; this gives us a Direction to follow the same general Rule in the Explication. Forasmuch as there are really no such Passions in the Deity, which seem to be attributed to him in these Expressions, I therefore would refer the whole Meaning of them to relative Considerations. And they are expressive of some indearing Relations, in which God

H stands

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stands to Man, in the Declarations of his Word and Constitution of his Covenant.

Upon a serious Review of these Passages under Consideration, you will find they all center in, and are gathered from some such Relation as this which follows. 'Tis that of a real Friend that wishes us well, and takes all proper Pains, and uses all proper Means to answer his kind End upon us.

As such a Friend seeing one in real Danger and in a wrong Way, does really by all proper Methods aim at that Person's Welfare, does really long for it, is ready to entertain Hopes of it, grieves and complains if the Means proposed are not attended to ; is pleased and delighted when they prove successful : So God himself is set forth to us, as using such Means and having such Affections, because he actually stands in this Relation to us, by the Declarations of his Word and the Constitution of his Covenant ; and because all the Perfections of his Nature are concerned in this Establishment. The Scripture assures us that God

has made it a Rule to act towards us, suitable to the Character of such a Friend.

Here then let us look a little into the Nature of the Divine Establishment, and see how far it falls in with this Relation. Observe therefore,

(1) That the Word of God determines all unbelieving, impenitent Persons to be in a State of Condemnation, and all penitent Believers to be in a State of Justification before God.

(2) It plainly asserts, that Repentance and Faith are to be looked upon, as the Way in which a Person passes from one State and Relation to the contrary.

(3) There are in the Word of God all those Truths declared, that have in themselves a Tendency to excite and encourage us to Faith and Repentance, and which give intire objective Ground for all such Actings of Soul, as are included in believing and repenting.

(4) Repentance and Faith are very justly and aptly described to us, under the Terms of *Coming, Seeking, Receiving, Flying, Running, Trusting*, and the like. And the more closely you look into the Nature of Faith and Repentance, the more exact, excellent and suitable you will find these Descriptions to be.

(5) All these Terms necessarily suppose, that there is a Freedom of Access opened to God in Christ ; that any poor Sinner has a free Liberty and Grant to come, trust, receive, and the like ; especially when we remember that Sinners are, in the Word, exhorted, intreated, and encouraged to come and trust, to repent and believe.

(6) From hence it follows, that the Declaration of this Establishment, and of the Truths contained under it, has the greatest Tendency to ingage us to true Faith and Repentance ; and that the Instructions, Exhortations, and Invitations of the Word, are the best Means that can be used to be-
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get such Experiences and Sentiments in our Hearts.

Now this being the universal Account the Scripture gives us of the Divine Establishment, you cannot but observe, that in all this, God stands in the Relation of a most tender Friend ; there is every Thing in it that suits such a Character. Here all the Blessings of Salvation are represented as treasured up in Christ, and as to be given freely to Sinners. Here the Sinner has direct objective Ground for the spiritual Acts of *Coming, Trusting, Receiving*, and the like : God by his Word declares this Constitution, and in the Dispensation thereof, invites and beseeches them to come, trust and receive. Upon the whole it is much the same, as if a very rich Man did make an Establishment, -and form a sincere Design in his own Mind, to give to all necessitous Persons that came to him, a full Supply, freely, and without regarding or requiring any prior Qualification in them ; and did cause this Design of his to be published, and did give Orders, that in Conse-

quence of this, every necessitous Person without Exception, should be press'd, exhorted and invited to go to him for a Supply ; and that all proper Means should be used by Declarations, Instruction, Warnings, Promises, Threatnings, Expostulations to win upon them for their own Advantage. Now would not such a rich Person, be justly accounted a truly great and generous Friend ; even tho' he knew that many would not be prevailed upon to accept his kind and sincere Offer ? The Indolence of some, or the Stupidity and Obstinacy of others, cast no Reflection upon such a generous Benefactor : And his Foreknowledge makes no Alteration, either in the Sincerity of his Design, or the Kindness of the Proposal itself.

Now take the divine Establishment as having such a Reality in it, and then you may see, that hereby God stands exactly in that Relation, which all the forementioned condescending Phrases allude to, are derived from and center in. No Wonder then that the Holy Ghost uses such Expressions to convey and inforce this Idea. The following
Thoughts

Thoughts may tend to confirm and illustrate what has been said.

(1) This gracious Settlement, thus understood, declared and dispensed, tends to produce all those Workings of Heart, which such affectionate Expressions of the Word seem to be primarily intended for.

(2) These Workings are such as take in the whole Nature of believing and repenting, which is the appointed Way, in which we take Possession of New-Covenant Blessings.

(3) God has in his own Mind determined to deal with every one, that is effectually wrought on by Means of these Truths, agreeable to the Nature, Promises and Blessings of this Covenant ; and all Believers shall find it to be so.

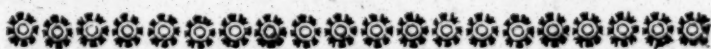
(4) Generally where the Work of Grace is begun upon any Soul by the Spirit, the Invitations, Promises, &c. of this Gospel Dispensation are the instrumental Means of this gracious Work.

(5) The great Reason why God did set on foot this Covenant, and this Dispensation of it, was, because he in his own secret Will, designed to make it an effectual Means to some for their Salvation; while there is the same objective Ground for Faith and Repentance, with Regard to all to whom the Gospel is dispensed.

(6) God has in the Method of his *Grace*, as well as in the Disposals of *Providence*, established a Connection of Probability and Subordination, between the regular Use of the Means and attaining the desired End. God has appointed Means, not only for himself to work by, but for us to make Use of: And we find that it is more probable for those to arrive at true Repentance, Faith and Holiness, who enjoy and improve the Means regularly, than for those who neglect them. Even as in *Providence*: Tho' God knows, and indeed has determined, who shall be rich and prosperous, and who not, yet we find the Means and End are generally connected together.

Now

Now take all these Considerations together, and conceive them all as included in one general Establishment of Divine Wisdom and Grace, and see whether this does not exhibit a proper Reality under all these affectionate Expressions, sufficient to answer all the Ends for which they must be supposed to stand in the Word of God.



C H A P. III.

These Phrases particularly explained.

I Would now descend to explain as distinctly as I can, the several Phrases that the Scripture uses upon this Subject.

(1) By the Revelation of the Word, and the Preaching of Gospel-Ministers, Sinners are told their miserable Condition, and the Freeness and Fulness of God's Grace in Christ; are called upon to come and receive Christ; are intreated, invited and expostulated

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postulated with upon these Principles. This I conceive is what the Scripture means by God's *Inviting, Beseeking*, and the like. Upon this Account, Christ is said *to stand and knock*; God is said *to rise early to send his Prophets*, and *to stretch forth his Hands all Day long*. Such Terms as these are directly explained in this Manner, 2 Cor. v. 20. where *Paul* says, We then are Ambassadors for Christ; as *tho' God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's Stead*, be ye reconciled unto God. So that God himself does not really exercise any fresh Act, either of Will or Power, to speak to us, or make us hear his Voice; but he, by the Intervention of his Word and Ministers, according to his own Appointment, stands in the Relation of an Inviter and Beseecher; which is the same to us, and ought to make the same Impression on us, as if God himself did immediately invite.

(2) When a Sinner is regardless Time after Time, of these Calls, Invitations and Expostulations thus dispensed, he now stands in the Relation of a rebellious, obstinate Person

Person towards a most tender Friend, and his Behaviour is as offensive to the Grace and Love of God, as display'd in the Gospel Dispensation, as the similar Behaviour of a poor Person is to a rich and generous Friend ; upon which Account, God himself is represented in such a Case, as a grieved, flighted Friend ; and such careless and rebellious Sinners are therefore said *to vex and grieve his holy Spirit*. In this Sense, God says, *Forty Years long was I grieved with this Generation* : And as one really offended and affronted, he complains, *How long, ye Simple, will ye love Simplicity ?*

(3) When a Sinner has had all Means made Use of towards him, which one would naturally expect should work upon his Mind and produce some Alteration in his Sentiments and Conduct, but all prove unsuccessful ; then God is said to have his Expectations disappointed, *Is. v. 4. Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth Grapes, brought it forth wild Grapes*. Not that we can suppose, that God meets with
any

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any Disappointment in his Expectations, or that his secret Will and Foreknowledge are frustrated. But this intimates, that a Sinner, in this Case, does stand in the same Relation to God and God to him, as between Man and Man would produce a fore Disappointment.

(4) When a Sinner has gone on so long in Rebellion as to be at the very Brink of inevitable Ruin, according to this general Settlement declared in the Word, but is not entirely given up, then God stands in such a Relation to him, as warrants such Expressions as these. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? Mine Heart is turned within me, my Repentings are kindled together.* Not that there are really such Affections in the Divine Being as are here expressed. But 'tis easy to observe, what Relation of a Friend to a Rebel these Affections refer to, and are derived from: And because God in his Establishment in the Word, stands in this very Relation to such Sinners, therefore he
is

is described as speaking to them in this Language.

(5) When Sinners continue so long in Rebellion, as to be past Recovery, according to the external Dispensation of the Covenant, then the Decree of their Ruin is said to be gone forth. And Christ, weeping over *Jerusalem*, says, *How often would I have gathered thee, &c. but now your House is left unto you desolate.* This was indeed the Case between God and the *Jews* as a Nation : But I apprehend, that if we regard the Dispensation of the Covenant to particular Sinners, their Day of Grace is never past ; nor is an objective Ground of Hope ever removed from them, until their Dissolution from the Body. *Then* indeed it will be true, that *many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able.* Luk. xiii. 24, 25. and then God will, as it were, *laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh.* Prov. i. 24—26.

(6) As such a tender Friend, as God appears to be in the Dispensation of the Covenant,

nant, wishes it were otherwise with rebellious ones than it is ; so God in Reference to this condescending Relation, speaks in this Manner. *O that my People had hearkened unto me ! O that they were wise, that they understood this ! &c.*

(7) When a Sinner is actually prevailed upon to repent and believe by the Means of Grace, blest by the Spirit of Grace, then God is set forth as *pleased, delighted, rejoiced*, and the like. Not that God has really these Affections ; but it is easy to see how these Expressions bear an Allusion to, are borrowed from, and center in these relative Considerations, which appear to have a full Reality in this Divine Establishment.

In a Word. God is said to be *desirous of, and to wish for* a Sinner's Return ; because that is agreeable to the general Design of the Gospel Dispensation. He is said to be *grieved* by the Sinner's Rebellion, because it is highly offensive to his Grace displayed in this Dispensation. He is said to be *disappointed*, by the Unsuccessfulness of the Means

Means, because it is contrary to the real Tendency of this Dispensation ; and he is said to be *pleased and delighted* with, and rejoiced at the Sinner's Return, because his Grace is hereby magnified, and all his Perfections exalted.



C H A P. IV.

The Consistency between the secret and revealed Will of God opened.

BY what has been said, I think I have tacitly prevented the Objections that may arise from the secret, sovereign Will of God, by explaining all these Phrases in such a Manner, as to have no immediate Regard unto this sovereign Will. But to make the whole clearer, I would now proceed to show the Consistency of God's revealed Will thus exprefs'd, with his secret will ; in a more open and explicit Manner, by the following Observations.

(1) The plain open Design of all these condescending Phrases, is to give Ground for, and to be a Means of exciting in us the Actings of Repentance, Faith, Hope, Trust, Love, Prayer, and the like ; and the more attentively you look into the Nature and true Meaning of them, the more you will see their Excellency and Sufficiency to answer this End.

(2) In order to find Ground for these Actings, we are under a Necessity to view God as standing in these Relations to us by this Establishment. For his secret Will is neither the Rule of our Duty, nor the Ground of our Hope : How plainly does it appear from hence, that there is no Need to explain these Expressions in any higher Sense, than as gathered from the Settlement of Grace, for they fully answer their End by referring them hither ; and indeed it is nothing but this Settlement, and the Dispensation of it, that can be supposed to contain the objective Ground of such Actings.

(3)

(3) There is no Possibility of carrying our Thoughts any higher upon this Subject, with any tolerable Degree of Regularity or Consistency. Our best Way is to fix our Eyes upon this revealed Establishment, which most nearly concerns us. Has it not been made to appear, that such is the Nature, Frame and Form of this Covenant and its Dispensation, from the Beginning to the End of it, as sets forth God in those endearing Relations, as give Ground for the strongest affectionate Expressions ; and if this be the Case, we cannot charge him with any Injustice, Cruelty, or Inconsistency ; since he gives full, suitable, sufficient Reality under all such Expressions by this Establishment.

(4) Observe that there is no Inconsistency between this revealed Covenant and his secret Will : For, (1) It was his sovereign Will first formed it. (2) His Will is always in it, as much as the Will of a King is in those Laws that he enacts. (3) He is de-

terminated in his own Mind, to act in every Point agreeable to it, towards all the Children of Men : How much Love and Grace foever appear in it, he will not alter his Purpose, or forfeit his Word. (4) The whole World will one Day be compelled to acknowledge, that they have been dealt with in every Respect answerable to this Establishment.

(5) Tho' he reserves to himself a Sovereignty of giving Faith and Repentance, the turning Point of our Salvation, to whom, and when he pleases ; yet (1) He by these Means gives full objective Ground for these Exercises of Soul. (2) Declares this objective Ground to all where the Gospel comes, and has given Orders that this Gospel should be preached to every Creature. (3) Makes Use of all fuitable Means to prevail upon Sinners. (4) Requires their diligent Use of them. (5) Generally gives the saving Blessings of Faith and Repentance in the regular Use thereof.

Now.

Now, to sum up the whole into the intended Conclusion, observe, That if all these condescending Expressions are drawn from, and fairly explained in this Establishment : And if there be no Manner of Inconsistency between God's sovereign Will and this Constitution ; then it is clear, that these Phrases are perfectly reconcileable unto the Divine absolute Will ; neither can they be said to infringe in the least upon it.

From the whole of this Representation, we may gather a Rule for understanding all such Phrases, wheresoever they are found ; for gaining Knowledge from them, and for making a due Improvement of them.

(1) The general Rule for understanding them is this. Whenever we read of any Passions or Affections ascribed to the Divine Being, which cannot be literally understood ; let us take particular Notice, what Relations such Expressions allude to and are gathered from ; then see what there is in
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the Divine Establishment, that answers to that Relation, and so we come at the Reality contained under them. For Instance. Then God is said to *repent*, when he changes his Method of Dispensation, because a former Method proves unsuccessful, and another Method is apparently necessary or proper. Take this Rule along with us, and we see what an easy, familiar, and beautiful Way, God takes to convey these Ideas by, and how natural it is for us to carry our Thoughts thro' these familiar Phrases unto the Reality of the Case represented thereby. Again,

(2) The general Rule for gaining Knowledge from them is this. Whatever familiar condescending Phrases we see in the Divine Word, we may be sure that there is something in the Divine Establishment, that answers to them in this Way. What that is we may easily guess from the foregoing Rule, and consequently, we may infer the Existence of such Relations in the Covenant as such Expressions allude to. And thus

thus we may gain more and more Ideas of the Nature, Form and Design of that Establishment, which God has fixed as the Rule of his Actions to his own People in particular, or to the Children of Men in general. And observe, that the Knowledge of this, includes the Chief of those Doctrines that are of the greatest Weight and Importance to us. For Instance. When God represents himself as deterred from his Design of destroying his People for their Sins, for Fear of the Wrath and Pride of their Enemies: As in *Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.* we may fairly learn from hence, that God in all his Dispensations towards his People, is determined to secure his own Honour in the midst of all their Provocations.

(3) The general Rule for making a due Improvement of these familiar Expressions is this. Observe what Affections and Performances such strong affectionate Phrases have a Tendency to excite in us towards our Fellow-creatures; and this will teach us what Workings should be in
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our Minds, and what Duty is required of us towards God, in this Establishment of his Grace. *If I be a Father, where is mine Honour, and if I be a Master, where is my Fear?* Malachi i. 6.



A P P E N D I X.



A P P E N D I X.

*Concerning the Wisdom, Suitableness,
Equity and Sincerity of the Gospel-
Dispensation.*



H U S I have indeavoured to give
such an Idea of a Divine Establish-
ment, as to explain the Chief of
those condescending Phrases, which cannot
be properly descriptive of the Acts either
of the Divine Will or Power ; and have
shown that by this Means, there is a proper
Reality under all those Expressions, which
is consistent with the Simplicity of the Di-
vine Nature, the Perfection of his Blessed-
ness, and the Unchangeableness of his
Decrees. What I have further to add upon
this

this Head, is only to show the beautiful Connection there is between this Establishment and the Divine Perfections on the *one* Hand ; and the State of Man as fallen on the *other* : In Hopes of being able hereby to show, how the Method God takes with fallen Man in the Dispensation of his Word, is consistent with the Divine Rectitude, Sincerity and Wisdom. And here let me observe,

1st. How necessary it is, that *some* Establishment should be fixed, and *some* condescending Relations commence, in order that there might be any suitable Communion between God and the Creature. Consider the Divine Being absolutely in himself, as a simple, unchangeable Being ; and he cannot properly be the Object of Faith or Hope or Prayer. For, in this View of God, let us believe or hope or pray ever so strongly or fervently, it cannot be supposed that any End should be answered thereby, since none of these Things can alter the Divine Will, or excite him to any Acts of Beneficence, he being in himself entirely un-

unchangeable. But not to insist upon this, I hope it will be allowed, that the best Method that can be taken to enter a Correspondence between the Creator and Creature, is by Precepts and Promises, Prohibitions and Threatnings, Doctrines and Declarations *on God's part*; and by the Hearing, Receiving and Believing, and being excited by them *on our Part*. Now observe, whatever Promises, Truths, Precepts, &c. are declared on God's Part, they cannot be supposed to be bare Words or empty Sounds; but must have a Reality under them: And these Declarations therefore being true, we must refer our Minds to some Divine Establishment, or Method, or Rule of Dealing for the Reality under them, which God has fixed in his own Mind, of which these Doctrines, Promises, &c. are the Declaration. Now further I have observed, that such an Establishment forms Relations of a condescending Kind between God and the Creature, which give Ground for Faith and Hope, and Prayer, and Dependance, and special Ground for Love and Delight in us towards him. I hope these Thoughts do at

once show the Excellency and Suitableness, if not the real Necessity, of some Divine Establishment, in order to a proper Communion between God and the rational Creature. Now then let us proceed,

(2) To fix our Eyes upon the Establishment of Grace, that subsists between God and Man as revealed in the Word; and see how suited it is to the divine absolute Perfections. And I hope every one who knows what it is, cannot but acknowledge, that herein he has abounded towards us, in all Wisdom and Prudence. Here Wisdom, and Power, and Holiness, and Justice, and Faithfulness, shine forth with peculiar Glory: Yea, we can behold the Divine Perfections in this Establishment, better than we can in the Works of Creation or Providence; yea, and better than in the most absolute metaphysical Reasonings and Conceptions. But the Inlargement upon this Subject is not what I principally aim at, but only to remark: If the Establishment itself is such, then surely the Dispensation of it cannot be supposed to be contradictory: Whatever Exhibitions, Offers,

Offers, Invitations, and affectionate Expressions are fairly deduced from, explained by, and centers in this Establishment, they surely cannot be contrary to the Divine Perfections.

The great Reason why we are ready to apprehend that these lively, indearing, condescending Expressions and Invitations are inconsistent with the Divine Integrity, when he knows that all will not be saved, and has determined to save but a Part of such as are invited ; I say, the great Reason of this is, because we forget, that they all have their Reality in, and are to be explained by this Establishment, without carrying our Conceptions any higher. And indeed there is no Necessity for it, since all the Ends of such Expressions are answered by referring them hither : And since the Establishment itself secures, that, whensoever these affecting Phrases do work sufficiently upon our Minds, the Event shall answer according to the Invitations and Promises of the Gospel. If therefore we fix our Ideas here, and conceive so much and no more

to be really meant by them, than what the Establishment itself gives Ground for ; it is clear that then there is no Opposition between the secret and revealed Will of God in this Case.

Upon this a farther Inquiry may be put. What tho' these Thoughts should reconcile Gospel Invitations to God's secret Purposes, yet still it does not appear, how it is consistent with the Divine Integrity, &c. to invite, beseech, and the like, those whom he knows utterly incapable to hearken to the Invitations, and obey the Calls of the Gospel. This leads me on,

3dly, To see how much this gracious Establishment is suited to the Case and Condition of fallen Man. Here three Things must be enquired into or described. (1) What is the real State of fallen Man ? (2) What is most suited to Man in this State ? (3) To show that this Establishment and the Dispensation of it, in the Way above described, is most adapted to answer the most valuable Purposes.

(1)

(1) What is the real State of fallen Man? And it must be acknowledged both from Scripture and Experience, to be intirely hopeless and deplorable in itself, since we are all by Nature under the Wrath of God and the Curse of the Law; being so corrupted, as to be indisposed or disabled to all spiritual Good, and inclined to all Evil. And all this to such a Degree, as that nothing less than a Divine Power can ever effectually make a saving Alteration, or inable and incline a Person realy to give a spiritual Answer to the Calls and Invitations of the Gospel. But then observe, that this Indisposition and Inability, is not *natural* but *moral*. The Propriety of these Terms, I will not contend for; but endeavour to explain my Meaning under them, by observing, (1) Man by the Fall has lost none of the natural Powers of his Soul or Mind: As Man he has Understanding, Will, Affections, Memory, Conscience, &c. We must not conceive, that any of these Things are wanting to any rational Mind; we are not by the Fall made properly Brutes, but

are still Subjects of what is generally called Moral Government. Nay, I would take Notice, that when the Spirit of God forms the new Creature, he does not give any fresh natural Powers either to our Souls or Bodies. (2) Observe : Tho' all the natural Powers of the Soul are depraved by the Fall ; yet they are still of the same Nature in themselves ; that is to say, the Mind in general is in itself suited to attend to Declarations, the Understanding to receive Truth, the Will to embrace it, the Memory to retain it, the Reason to argue upon it, and draw Inferences from it. (3) This Incapacity and Inability that is in us to that which is spiritually good, is primarily in the *Will*. Our Inability consists in our Disinclination ; our *cannot* consists in a *will not*. So that it must be said, that Man both cannot and will not come to Christ for Life : Or thus, we *cannot* because we *will not* ; no Person is really willing to do what he naturally can ; Persons have an Unwillingness, a Backwardness, an Aversion to attend to the Truths of the Gospel, the Duties of the Law, and such Things as these ; and nothing short of a

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Divine Power can change this *Will*. Now this in short being the real Case with Man by Nature; let us next see,

2dly, What is most suited to work upon Man in this State for his Good. And certainly since Man is a rational Creature; having Understanding and Will, and being still a Subject of moral Government; he is and ought to be dealt with as a rational Creature, by moral Perswasion, Arguments, Injunctions, Invitations, Declarations, and the like. If the Understanding be in Fault, the rational Method is to give Instruction. If the Will be in Fault, it is to use Perswasion and Intreaty. If the Conscience be in Fault, the proper Method is to make close Appeals to it, &c. This is the Way we take with one another in almost all Cases; and surely then, if God himself takes this Course, we must own it right. Nay, I must here observe, that a Declaration of his absolute secret Will would not be suited to this Purpose. 'Tis, I may say, almost necessary from the Nature of Man, that he should be wrought upon by or through suitable

able Instructions and Invitations ; and altho' no Instructions may or can of themselves be effectual ; yet whensoever a Change is wrought in the Will or Inclination, it is by or through these Instructions as a Means. Now if this be true, it would be infringing upon the very Nature of Man to declare the secret Will of God. If all the Elect were set down by Name in the Word of God, and each Person was to see it ; would this have any Suitableness to induce any Person to receive the Gospel ? would this tend to change his Will from Sin to Holiness ? I am ready to conceive upon a Survey of this Matter, that such a Method or Exhibition as this, would make it necessary for the Divine Being directly to force our Wills, instead of bending and changing them, in order to fulfil his own Purposes. And farther, any one may see, that the Nature of Man is such, that in order for any *one* to be rationally persuaded from Evil to Good, from Sin to *Christ* ; those Arguments or Invitations must be used to *him*, which would be equally suited to *another*, and be as true concerning any one as concerning him.

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These Thoughts I apprehend clear the Way for this Observation ; That where the Fault lies in the Understanding and Will, no better Method can be taken than to make such an external Exhibition as is suited to all, as much as to the particular Persons to whom God himself designs to make it effectual. And if this be the Case ; then there are several Reasons to be given, why this Exhibition should be made to all *promiscuously*, as well as to those to whom it shall prove savingly useful ; as well to those that shall not be saved, as to those that shall. I say it is proper that this Exhibition, which is suited to all, should be promiscuously propounded. (1) For the Manifestation of the Divine Glory ; that all the Nations may see something of the Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, and Faithfulness of God ; that he might have the greater Tribute of Glory from this most glorious and instructing Establishment. (2) For the Regulation of the World. There is something so excellent in this Exhibition, that it actually does a great deal of Service among Mankind ; even tho' it should not prove savingly

ingly effectual to many. God has in many Cases given Persons such strong Convictions of the Evil of Sin, and has brought them under such great Restraints, by this Means, as to keep the World in a much better Order, than could be supposed would have been the Case without it. And 3dly, I must here again hint at what I have before mentioned ; that an open promiscuous Exhibition of the Ground of Hope, and the Rule of Duty, is necessary to secure the Nature of Man's *Will* in its Actings towards this Constitution and Dispensation. To suppose that it must be declared to none but those to whom it shall be made effectual, would make it necessary for the Scripture to point out the Persons by Name who shall be saved ; which, according to the Nature of Man, seems to lay a Ground for as great a Confusion ; as for every Person to be ascertained of the particular Time and Manner of his Death, and of all future Events that concern him. But now observe, how easily, uniformly and beautifully, the Divine secret Purposes are answered, by making the Invitation grounded upon this Constitution,

stitution, promiscuous. Here all in general have the same Warnings, Declarations, Grounds of Hope, and free Invitations; so that now he that shall be saved, not having any Thing to lay hold of, or build upon but what others have; he, when it is made effectual to him, acts according to the Nature of the human Mind; and the only Difference between him and others is, that *he* believes, receives, and builds upon those Truths, which are equally proposed to others, while *others* do not believe or receive them.

But in order to answer or anticipate Objections, I would show, that as the Divine Establishment is and should be, so it *may* without any Hesitation be thus dispensed to all in general. For (1) There is Nothing declared to any, but what is strictly true if rightly understood. Christ really has all these Blessings to give, which he presents in the Invitation; so that it is not an *empty* Invitation: He puts no Bars in the Way of our embracing the Blessings presented; but does really intend to give them to all, that

are excited by the Exhibition to come for them ; and so it is not a *deceitful* Invitation : And he never raises the Desires of any by it, in order to disappoint them ; for as soon as ever the Exhibition has this Effect, the Way is absolutely clear for a Person to take and possess, and so it is not a *tantalizing* Invitation. (2) It is plain God takes a Method similar to this in the Work of Creation and Providence. Thus in *Nature* ; tho' all Trees, Plants, and Animals, in general are designed for the Use of Man, yet those same general Principles that work to produce them, do produce much more than God himself knew would ever be used by Man. *He causeth it to rain in the Wilderness wherein there is no Man.* Thus in *Providence* ; it is plain in the ordinary Course of Things, he gives Persons more Opportunity and Advantages for their temporal Welfare, than he knows they will make Use of. And if this be his Method in Nature and Providence, why is it not as regular that God, in the external Dispensations of his Grace, should cause these out-ward

ward Advantages to reach them, that he knows will not use them.

(3) It is plain that *Men* do frequently act similar to this. Do we not in temporal and spiritual Affairs too, make Use of Arguments, Persuasions, Invitations and Offers, when we are pretty certain that they will not universally prevail? Are not many Offers made *gratis* to all or any, when we know but few in Comparison will accept? This I might enlarge upon and diversify; but let it suffice to say, that if Men to one another may use promiscuous Intreaties, Invitations and Offers; tho' we do not so much as suspect or suppose, that all that are intreated will accept; why may not the Divine Being do the same? But some may perhaps say: That making the Exhibition of free Salvation in Christ to them that shall not be saved, does aggravate their Condemnation. To this I answer, (1) It is plain that this is only an accidental Consequence, such as the Exhibition itself has no Tendency unto; and (2) It is no farther an Aggravation to their Guilt or Misery, than as they, by their

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wilful Negligence and Obstinacy, refuse to hear him that speaketh to them. I have only one Thing more to inlarge upon.

(3) To show that this Establishment and the Dispensation of it is the most suited to the State of fallen Man. Now let us take a general Survey of it to this Purpose. Is the *Understanding* naturally blind, here are the brightest and most important Discoveries suited to enlighten it. Is the *Conscience* stupid, here are the most rousing, awakening and weighty Considerations produced to View. Is the *Will* obstinate and perverse, here are the most mollifying, inviting, indearing Truths presented. But farther, this Exhibition comes the nearest our Case that you can suppose. Are we in great Danger, it propounds a Refuge; are we under great Corruption and Weakness, it propounds all-sufficient Strength and Grace. Again, are we incapable to help ourselves, and unable to bring any Thing to God as a Price or Condition, all this that we want is presented as *freely* to be given to us and wrought in us. Again, are we under any Concern, that our State is so bad, do
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we see it as altogether hopeless in itself, here is full, free, suitable, sufficient Grace held forth in Jesus Christ, attended with the sincerest and freest Invitations. Again, are we naturally ignorant that our State is so bad, here we are told in the most plain, affecting, and close Language, what it really is : And lastly, are we naturally unconcerned about our Souls, here is presented before us a future eternal State ; Heaven with all its Joys, Hell with all its Terrors, the Shortness of Life, the Vanity of the Creature, and indeed all the most striking Thoughts, that Man can conceive, or could invent to rouse and awaken : And remember that the Act of *Coming, Trusting, &c.* is Nothing else but that Exercise of Desire and Expectation that would necessarily arise from a real Belief of these Things.

Now take all these Things together ; the Incapacity of Man being *moral* and spiritual, not physical and *natural* ; this plainly shows, that such Commands and Exhortations, are not like commanding a Man to walk that has no Legs, or to see that has no Eyes, or to work that has no Hands. The Difference lies here. No

Exhortations that can possibly be used to a Man naturally blind or lame, are in the least suited to restore his Sight or Limbs. But in the Case before us, it is far otherwise. For here every Exhortation and Invitation has the Nature, not only of a *Motive*, but likewise of a *Means*; for as soon as any Person is really prevail'd upon to believe these Truths, and to hearken duly to these Exhortations, his spiritual Disorders are actually cured; his Understanding is enlightened, his Will is changed, and his Affections receive a new Turn. God in the Dispensation of the Covenant uses these Means, and the Spirit by his Divine Power renders them effectual. When the Fault lies not in a Want of natural Powers and Capacity, but in the Understanding, Will, and Conscience: What Method more suitable, excellent and sincere can be taken, than by applying to the Understanding by Doctrines; to the Will and Affections by Promises, Invitations and Exhortations; and to the Conscience by solemn Appeals. Especially when we remember that all these Addresses have a sufficient Reality under them, to ground all that Concern, Desire and Hope upon, which they tend to excite.

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